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BEFORE ADAM



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Broken Tooth displayed remarkable
agility in the game. He was "it" less
frequently than any of us, and in the
course of the game he discovered one
difficult "slip" that neither Lop Ear
nor I was able to accomplish. To be
truthful, we were afraid to attempt it.

When we were "it" Broken Tooth
always ran out to the end of a lofty
branch in a certain tree. From the end
of the branch to the ground it must
have been seventy feet and nothing in-
tervened to break a fall. But about
twenty feet lower down and fully fif-
teen feet out from the perpendicular
was the thick branch of another tree.
As we ran out the limb Broken
Tooth, facing us, would begin teeter-
ing. This naturally impeded our pro-
gress, but there was more in the teeter-
ing than that. He teetered with his
back to the jump he was to make. Just
as we nearly reached him he would let
her go. The teetering branch was like
a springboard. It threw him far out,
backward, as he fell. And as he fell
he turned around sideways in the air
so as to face the other branch into
which he was falling. This branch
bent far down under the impact and
sometimes there was an ominous
crackling, but it never broke, and out
of the leaves was always to be seen
the face of Broken Tooth, grinning
triumphantly up at us.

I was "it" the last time Broken
Tooth tried this. He had gained the
end of the branch and begun his teeter-
ing, and I was creeping out after
him, when suddenly there came a low
warning cry from Lop Ear. I looked
down and saw him in the main fork
of the tree crouching close against the
trunk. Instinctively I crouched down
upon the thick limb. Broken Tooth
stopped teetering, but the branch
would not stop, and his body contin-
ued bobbing up and down with the
rustling leaves.

I heard the crackle of a dry twig
and, looking down, saw my first Fire
Man. He was creeping stealthily along
on the ground and peering up into the
tree. At first I thought he was a wild
animal, because he wore around his
waist and over his shoulders a ragged
piece of bearskin. And then I saw
his hands and feet and more clearly
his features. He was very much like
my kind, except that he was less hairy
and that his feet were less like hands
than ours. In fact, he and his people,
as I was later to know, were far less
hairy than we, though we, in turn,
were equally less hairy than the Tree
People.

It came to me instantly as I looked
at him. This was the terror of the
northeast, of which the mystery of
smoke was a token. Yet I was puz-
zled. Certainly he was nothing of
which to be afraid. Red Eye or any
of our strong men would have been
more than a match for him. He was
old, too, wizened with age, and the
hair on his face was gray. Also he
limped badly with one leg. There
was no doubt at all that we could out-
run him and outlimb him. He could
never catch us; that was certain.

But he carried something in his
hand that I had never seen before. It
was a bow and arrow. But at that time
a bow and arrow had no meaning for
me. How was I to know that death
lurked in that bent piece of wood?
But Lop Ear knew. He had evidently
seen the Fire People before and knew
something of their ways. The Fire
Man peered up at him and circled
around the tree. And around the main
trunk above the fork Lop Ear circled,
too, keeping always the trunk between
himself and the Fire Man.

The latter abruptly reversed his cir-
cling. Lop Ear, caught unawares, al-
so hastily reversed, but did not win
the protection of the trunk until after
the Fire Man had twanged the bow.
I saw the arrow leap up, miss Lop Ear,
glance against a limb and fall back to
the ground. I danced up and down on
my lofty perch with delight. It was a
game! The Fire Man was throwing
things at Lop Ear as we sometimes
threw things at one another.

The game continued a little longer,
but Lop Ear did not expose himself a
second time. Then the Fire Man gave
it up. I leaned far out over my hori-
zontal limb and chattered down at
him. I wanted to play. I wanted to
have him try to hit me with the thing.
He saw me, but ignored me, turning
his attention to Broken Tooth, who
was still teetering slightly and involun-
tarily on the end of the branch.

The first arrow leaped upward,
Broken Tooth yelled with fright and
pain. It had reached its mark. This
put a new complexion on the matter.
I no longer cared to play, but crouched
trembling close to my limb. A second
arrow and a third soared up, missing
Broken Tooth, rustling the leaves as
they passed through, arching in their
flight and returning to earth.

The Fire Man stretched his bow
again. He shifted his position, walk-
ing away several steps, then shifted it
a second time. The bowstring twang-
ed, the arrow leaped upward, and
Broken Tooth, uttering a terrible
scream, fell off the branch. I saw him
as he went down, turning over and
over, all arms and legs it seemed, the
shaft of the arrow projecting from his
chest and appearing and disappearing
with each revolution of his body.

Sheer down, screaming, seventy feet
he fell, smashing to the earth with an
audible thud and crunch, his body
rebounding slightly and settling down
again. Still he lived, for he moved
and quivered, clawing with his hands
and feet. I remember the Fire Man
running forward with a stone and
hammering him on the head. * * *
I remember no more.
Always during my childhood at this

stage of the dream did I wake up
screaming with fright—to find often
my mother or nurse, anxious and start-
led, by my bedside, passing soothing
hands through my hair and telling me
that they were there and that there
was nothing to fear.

CHAPTER VI.

My next dream in the order of suc-
cession begins always with the flight
of Lop Ear and myself through the
forest. The Fire Man and Broken
Tooth and the tree of the tragedy are
gone. Lop Ear and I, in a cautious
panic, are fleeing through the trees.
In my right leg is a burning pain, and
from the flesh, protruding head and
shaft from either side, is an arrow of
the Fire Man. Not only did the pull
and strain of it pain me severely, but
it bothered my movements and made
it impossible for me to keep up with
Lop Ear.

At last I gave up, crouching in the
secure fork of a tree. Lop Ear went
right on. I called to him most plain-
tively, I remember, and he stopped and
looked back. Then he returned to me,
climbing into the fork and examining
the arrow. He tried to pull it out, but
one way the flesh resisted the barbed
head, and the other way it resisted the
feathered shaft. Also it hurt grievously,
and I stopped him.

For some time we crouched there,
Lop Ear nervous and anxious to be
gone, perpetually and apprehensively
peering this way and that, and myself
whispering softly and sobbing. Lop
Ear was plainly in a funk, and yet his
conduct in remaining by me in spite
of his fear I take as a foreshadowing
of the altruism and comradeship that
have helped make man the mightiest
of the animals.

Once again Lop Ear tried to drag the
arrow through the flesh, and I angrily
stopped him. Then he bent down and
began gnawing the shaft of the arrow
with his teeth. As he did so he held
the arrow firmly in both hands so that
it would not play about in the wound,
and at the same time I held on to him.
I often meditate upon this scene—the



How Was I to Know That Death
Lurked in That Bent Piece of Wood?

two of us, half grown cubs, in the
childhood of the race, and the one
mastering his fear, beating down his
stefid impulse of flight, in order to
stand by and succor the other. And
there rises up before me all that was
there foreshadowed, and I see visions
of Damon and Pythias, of life saving
crews and Red Cross nurses, of mar-
tyrs and leaders of forlorn hopes, of
Father Damien and of the Christ him-
self, and of all the men of earth,
mighty of stature, whose strength may
trace back to the elemental loins of
Lop Ear and Big Tooth and other dim
denizens of the younger world.

When Lop Ear had chewed off the
head of the arrow the shaft was with-
drawn easily enough. I started to go
on, but this time it was he that stop-
ped me. My leg was bleeding profusely.
Some of the smaller veins had
doubtless been ruptured. Running out
to the end of a branch Lop Ear gath-
ered a handful of green leaves. These
he stuffed into the wound. They ac-
complished the purpose, for the bleed-
ing soon stopped. Then we went on
together back to the safety of the
caves.

Well I do remember that first win-
ter after I left home. I have long
dreams of sitting shivering in the cold.
Lop Ear and I sit close together, with
our arms and legs about each other,
blue faced and with chattering teeth.
It got particularly crisp along toward
morning. In those chill early hours
we slept little, huddling together in
numb misery and waiting for the sun-
rise in order to get warm.

When we went outside there was a
crackle of frost under foot. One morn-
ing we discovered ice on the surface
of the quiet water in the eddy where



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